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KING OF THE HILL

CIA Director Stansfield Turner has succeeded in solidifying his position as Numero Uno in the U.S. intelligence community by obtaining control over the budgets of two Defense Department spy operations.

We don't mean to imply that Adm. Turner is merely empire-building. Consolidation will probably, as he claims, reduce waste and duplication—and we are all for anything that will make U.S. intelligence operations more efficient and effective.

But the concentration of power has serious potential drawbacks, too. An all-powerful czar could use his authority to whittle down CIA "competitors," or pigeon-hole information and estimates that didn't gee with CIA positions.

Ultimately, the responsibility for preventing abuses rests with President Carter. He has broadened considerably the scope of Turner's authority, and it will be up to him to see that (1) subordinate agencies are fairly treated, and (2) dissenters have clear lines of communication to the White House when they differ with the official CIA line.